

HAMNET BULLETIN FOR SUNDAY 2 May 2004

HAMNET is the Official Emergency Communications network of the South African Radio League and provides emergency communication to local, regional and national authorities, when requested to do so.

NOTE THIS BULLETIN IS BEING SENT IN NORMAL E-MAIL FORMAT AND NOT BCC AS MANY PEOPLE COMPLAINED LAST MONTH THAT THEY DID NOT GET A COPY

THIS BULLETIN WAS COMPILED AND PREPARED BY FRANCOIS BOTHA ZS6BUU.

IN THE BULLETIN TODAY:-

BULLETINS AROUND THE COUNTRY EMERGENCIES AROUND THE WORLD THE VALUE OF MORSE CODE IN EMERGENCIES REPORT BACK ON SECUNDA VISIT THE CHERRY ON TOP

2. HAMNET BULLETINS AROUND THE COUNTRY

KZN Sunday morning at 07H00 on their local VHF repeaters with a relay on 7.070MHz

National Bulletin at 17H00 local on 145,700MHz, 10,130Mhz in the 30M band with a relay on 7.070Mhz in the 40M band.

The Gauteng North bulletin will follow immediately after the National Bulletin on 145,725MHz in the Pretoria area on Sundays.

North West Province have a club bulletin on Mondays, which includes a Hamnet segment at 19H00 local on 3,750Mhz in the 80M band as well as their local repeater on 145.737.5Mhz.

Hamnet Western Cape Province meet on Wednesdays at 20H30 local on 145:700MHz, relayed on 3,674MHz.

The HAMNET Bulletin is sent to all those of whom I have an e-mail address and also sent out on packet by Rudi, ZS6DX.

2. EMERGENCIES AROUND THE WORLD

During the last few months, I have not dwelt on emergencies, disasters and various problems around the world. Lets get international news up to date.

During the period from January to April 2004, looking only at natural disasters around the globe, the total reaches a staggering total of 30, with 11 of those in the month of April alone.

It all started with an earthquake in Afghanistan, followed by floods in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Then came floods in Mexico and typhoon "Sudal" in Micronesia.

Not wanting to concentrate in only one part of the globe, Fiji had floods and Bangladesh had a tornado. Of all places, Djibouti and Saudi Arabia had floods. This was really out of the ordinary as these are traditionally dry and arid countries.

This was followed by landslides in Kyrgyz Stan, floods in the Russian Federation, and the latest was the Explosion in North Korea and further flooding in Manipur-India. The Korean explosion was caused by carelessness and could eventually cost the lives of 100 s of residents and almost flattened all the buildings in the town. The railway station was completely destroyed.

Downloading information form the ARRL website, various ARES groups were activated on April 20th due to severe weather emergencies in southern Oklahoma. Tornadoes, severe thunderstorms and hail struck the state on 20 and 21st April. Hailstones the size of a baseball punished people and vehicles and made travel difficult, if not impossible.

At one stage, almost all of the states 77 counties were under tornado watch. As you may know, they also have what is know as a SKYWARN facility where unnatural or severe weather conditions are reported to various weather stations and warning reports are issued to radio stations to warn residents of pending heavy weather.

All these events look place in April only. The other 19 took place from January through to the end of March. Some of the countries involved were Timor, Afghanistan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Madagascar (you remember Cyclones Elita and Gafilo), Peru, Iran, New Zealand (you may recall some TV coverage of severe flooding in February), Spain and China.

Again, the call goes out that we should not become complacent. We are so fortunate that our country is free of severe natural disasters. Here we only looked at natural disasters. The list of other emergencies is a foolscap page long and divided into 3 columns and touches almost every country on earth.

We have a lot to be grateful for.

3. THE VALUE OF MORSE CODE IN EMERGENCIES.

Paging through some old Radio ZS Magazines the other day, Martin Harper, ZS6MSG, came across an article that appeared in the June 1980 edition. This article underscores the value of Morse Code and although there seems to be a move world wide to abandon this form of communication, lets not forget that when all else fails, pumping a key or even keying a microphone in cw mode, is still a valuable means of communication.

In short, a yacht called the “White Wave”, was battered by the hurricane Albert and had all but perished in the rough seas. Her mast was gone and with that, there was no antenna of any sort to send out a distress call.

On board were a family of 4 of whom Jenny, the wife of the skipper, held a novice amateur certificate issued by Australia. She was also the radio operator.

After 5 days, a makeshift mast was erected with some form of sail and some form of antenna.

This is where Reg Sweet, ZS5CO came into the picture. Reg was a correspondent for the Daily News in Durban, and also an ardent Amateur Radio enthusiast.

Then Jenny tapped out her SOS, her call sign and the position of the yacht. This was heard by Reg and this immediately swung into operation, a rescue attempt via South Africa, Australia and Malaysia. Three ships were diverted and the “Alta Queen” was the first to reach the yacht within 24 hours, approx 160 kilometres south of Rodriguez Island.

From Toowoomba in far-off Queensland, Reg had a phone call from a lady called Chris, the sister of Jenny, to thank him for his efforts in this rescue attempt. Needless to say, Reg felt a very happy man that evening for his efforts and also that Morse code was the life saving instrument in this rescue effort.

Many people regard Morse code as an ancient means of communication. There are still many thousands of amateurs around the world who communicate by Morse code only and you hardly ever hear them on phone.

Lets not neglect this “outdated” as some may suggest, means of communication. It could save someone s life one day.

3. REPORT BACK ON SECUNDA VISIT

Some time back, I was invited to address a combined Club meeting in Secunda on 1 May. In all about 30 plus people attended and It was rather pleasant to discuss HAMNET and emergency communication in particular. It was also pleasing to see that there is still a lot of interest in HAMNET as an emergency communication group.

The Grant was discussed and also the request to all to submit their ideas on how we should allocate the funds for the benefit of emergency communication in the future.

4. THE CHERRY ON TOP

At the AGM in April, I made the announcement that the Department of Transport, who are the umbrella body for Search & Rescue, allocated a grant of R50,000 to HAMNET.

These funds have been placed in trust for 6 months to give us time to develop a plan of action as to how we intend to allocate these funds for the benefit of HAMNET and in general, emergency communication country-wide.

We have to report back to the DoT as to how these funds are going to be allocated, spent and or distributed.

This is where (a) all the Provincial Directors will play a part and (b) all HAMNET members will be able to contribute to their Provincial Directors as to how

we intend to use these funds for the benefit of Search & Rescue and emergency communication in general.

I have already indicated that the allocation will be on a Rand for Rand basis. I personally feel this is very fair and it will prevent the money being spent unwisely. I therefore make an appeal to all concerned, lets get a plan together over the next 2 to 3 months, work on it and then present the DoT with a Business Plan that will ensure that they can see that the grant is being well managed.

What I need to stress here is the fact that with this grant, the DoT now regard us as a critical arm of any National or Provincial Government that may need our expertise. Please bear this in mind. Our professionalism in supplying needy emergency communication is now on the line.

I look forward to getting your plans and ideas during the next few weeks so this whole restructuring of HAMNET, to the benefit of Search & Rescue, Air Traffic & Navigational Systems and our communities, can begin in earnest.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

For your information, some times and frequencies that are used by the United Nations in New York as well as the emergency shipping frequency.

The United Nations call sign is 4U1UN. They operate on 14.268, 21.368 and 28.468 MHz. They have a bulletin on Tuesdays at 23:30 UTC and is read by NA2K. It is a bit after midnight but may be worth a listen now and again, depending on propagation. I would suggest the short path that time of the night.

The Maritime International Emergency Frequency is on 2,182MHz lower side band.

Frequencies you could keep in mind when monitoring.

Bulletin ends.